# BROKENBROW

A TRAGEDY BY ERNST TOLLER

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# BROKEN-BROW

A TRAGEDY BY
ERNST TOLLER
TRANSLATED BY
VERA MENDEL
WITH DRAWINGS
BY GEORG GROSZ

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V.M.

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

EUGENE BROKENBROW
MARGARET BROKENBROW (*his wife*)
MRS. BROKENBROW (*his mother*)
JOCK ROOSTER
FANNY
TOM CALLOW
DICK FAITHFUL
HARRY BURLEY
BILL BEER
*The* PROPRIETOR *of a travelling show*
*Various* WORKING MEN *and* WOMEN
*Some Twentieth Century Types as passers-by.*

*" A man who has no strength for dreams has lost the strength to live."*

# BROKENBROW

## ACT I : SCENE I

INDICATES THE KITCHEN-LIVING ROOM OF A WORKMAN'S HOUSE. MAGGIE BROKENBROW IS POTTERING ABOUT AT THE RANGE. EUGENE BROKENBROW COMES IN. HE SITS DOWN. HIS RIGHT HAND LIES BEFORE HIM ON THE TABLE. HE IS CLUTCHING SOME SMALL OBJECT AT WHICH HE STARES INCESSANTLY. (BROKENBROW MUST SPEAK WITHOUT ANY FLUENCY OR PATHOS. HIS SPEECH IS THAT OF SIMPLE FOLK—LABOURED AND TONELESS.)

★MAGGIE: Did mother give you the coals?

Eugene *is silent.*

Gene! I'm asking you: did mother give you the coals? Answer me. You'd think his wits are wandering. Gene! Do say something. What's to become of us? Not a bit of wood, not a bit of coal. Gene! Do you want me to burn the bedstead to keep the range going?

★GENE: The little creature. Such lovely colours. Its heart is beating so hard I can feel it with my hands. Sitting in the dark. Now it'll always be in the dark.

★MAGGIE: What have you got there, Gene?

★GENE: And you can just stand there by the range! I wonder the saucepan doesn't drop out of your hands! Can't you feel a great darkness coming over you? A creature, a little live thing, might be you or me. So pleased with its little self. Chirrup, chirrup—you know how they chirrup away in the mornings? Pleased to see the light again, they are—tweet tweet! But now—but now! When I walked in she had just put out its eyes with a red-hot knitting needle . . . (*he groans aloud*).

★MAGGIE: What? Who?

★GENE: Your mother. Your own mother. Fancy a mother putting out the eyes of a goldfinch because the paper said that blind birds sing better! I chucked her coals on the floor, I did; and the ten bob she gave me. Maggie, I punished your mother the same as you'd punish a child that was cruel to animals. But then I let her go; because I seemed to remember—it was horrible—didn't I use to do the same thing and think nothing of it? The feelings of an animal, well, what about it? Wring its neck, cut its throat, put a bullet through it—who cares? When I

was in good health all that seemed just as it should be. Now that I'm a cripple I *know*; it's a horrible thing! It's murdering one's own flesh. Worse than murder; torturing a live body. But in those days—people in good health are blind, I tell you, just blind!

★MAGGIE: Oh, *what* have you been doing? That's our last chance gone.

★GENE: But just think of it! A mother putting out the eyes of a live animal. How could she, I ask you, how could she?

Maggie *goes out.*

★GENE (*to the bird*): Poor little beast! Poor little blighter! They've fixed us up good and proper, you and me. Human beings did that. Human beings! If you could talk you'd say it was devils, what we call human beings. Maggie! She's gone off. Probably tired of us. (*He hunts about for something.*) Crumbs—and a cage. What, a cage? To show each other how miserable we are? No, *I* won't be cruel to you. I'll be what they call Fate. Kinder than my fate is to me. Because, you see, I'm fond of you. . . .

Gene *rushes out. After a few moments he comes back without the goldfinch.*

Nothing but a little splash of red on the wall and a few feathers. And there's an end. That's an idea. Makes you giddy to think of, though. But if they'd shown me some one like I am now, in the old days, I don't know what I'd have done. You don't rightly know what you'd do in some cases; you don't really know yourself. I might have laughed—I might even have laughed! And what about *her*? Her mother puts out the eyes of a goldfinch. How do you know what *she'll* do? (*He laughs hysterically and begins to screech a tune in a high shrill voice.*)

Maggie *comes in and looks at him in terror. She stops her ears with a shudder of disgust and suddenly sobs aloud.*

★MAGGIE: O my God! O my God!

★GENE (*turns to Maggie in a burst of fury*): What's the matter? What are you howling for? What is it? Can't you speak? Are you howling because I'm—because I—because people would point at me in the street like a freak, if they knew what's the matter with me? Because some blasted hero's bullet made a cripple of me—made a laughing-stock of me? Because you're ashamed of me? Is that it? Tell me the truth—the truth, woman! . . . Steady! . . . I've gone all giddy—— (*Tenderly beseeching her.*) I want the truth. Why are you crying?

★MAGGIE: I . . . I love you so. . . .

★GENE: Are you sure it's love? Or are you just sorry for me? Aren't you holding my hand just because you're so sorry for me?

★MAGGIE: I love you. . . .

★GENE: When our dog got old—a dog we had when we were kids—such a good old dog, as faithful as they make 'em, wouldn't ever let any one do us any harm—well, he got the mange and his hair fell out and his eyes were all runny. You couldn't bear to touch him; he was a sight. It made you sick to look at him. Except, you see, that we remembered what he used to be like, looking at you just like a human being when you were in trouble. So we couldn't just put an end to him—so we had to have him about the house—even when he got on the beds. . . . (*He screams out*) Maggie! Am I like that dog?

★MAGGIE (*stops her ears, in despair*): I can't stand it any longer! I'll do myself in! I'll turn on the gas! I can't stand it!

★GENE (*helplessly*): Maggie, old girl, what's the matter? I'll do you no harm. I'm only a poor bloody cripple. A sick man—like one of these secret diseases. I'm a punch-and-judy show that's been worked till its arms dropped off, that's what I am. The pension's not enough to live on and just a bit too much to die on. Maggie, I'd back down on my mates; I think I'd even start scabbing for you, if I only knew. . . . But you see, what I can't swallow—what's eating me is the idea that you—that I'm nothing to you but a mangy dog. (*Speaking softly, secretly.*) And listen, Maggie, since to-day, since that happened at your mother's, since I got that idea, that horrible idea—I've been haunted, yes, haunted. Voices and faces—like a bogy on my back, like a gramophone squeaking at me all the time. "Gene the Funny Man", it says, "Gene the Freak Show". Over and over again: "Gene the Funny Man—Gene the Freak Show". And then, all of a sudden, I see you, all alone in the room by the window, watching me walk along the street—hiding behind the curtains—and laughing, holding your sides for laughing, laughing fit to burst yourself, laughing. . . . (*After a few moments he says simply:*) Now, Maggie, you couldn't do that, could you? You couldn't laugh at me?

★MAGGIE: What *am* I to say to you, Gene? You won't believe me anyway.

★GENE: Yes I will, yes I will, Maggie, my dear. I'm so happy. I'm plumb silly, I'm so happy! I believe you. I'll get work all right. Just you wait! Even if I have to crawl on all fours and make a beast of myself.

Jock Rooster *comes in.*

*JOCK : Evening, all.

*MAGGIE AND GENE : Evening, Jock.

*JOCK : Well, what's up? Always merry and bright, I *don't* think.

*GENE : *You've* got nothing to grouse about. You've got a job and you'll be foreman one of these days.

*JOCK : Like hell! This here restriction of output will do me in. A working man has less chance than a dumb brute these days. *They* get fattened up anyway, and turned out to grass; and only when they're bloody well bursting with beans—off to the butcher!

*MAGGIE : You oughtn't to say things like that. It's downright blaspheming against God.

*JOCK : The likes of us can't come to judgment. Even if there were one, we poor devils would have to go to heaven, because these blasted profiteers don't give us time for any sins. And anyhow that would only be right as a reward for making our bosses so damn comfortable in this world. Anyway I'm an atheist. Don't believe in God any more. Which God, I ask you? The Jew's God? The heathen's God? The Christian's God? The Frenchies' God? The German God?

*GENE : I shouldn't wonder if they'd all got stuck on the barbed wire in No-man's-land. The god of battles, that's them—all the lot of them.

*MAGGIE : All my life I've believed in God's justice. You can't take that from me.

*JOCK : If God were just, Missis, he'd have to *act* just. But does he? The dear, just, merciful God! Not he! Come, we know better'n that by now. God and my King! God and my country! God and murder! God and Mammon! All in the name of God. You'd think the gentry say " God " wants this, that, and the other thing whenever they're ashamed to say "*I* want ". Sounds better! People fall for it. I'd leave believing in God to people who can make a profit out of it. The likes of us aren't fighting for the next world, but for this; we're not on the side of the angels, we're on the side of the workers, we are.

*GENE : Fighting for the workers is all very well. But to go and fight for the works, for those blasted machines that break your bones before they're fairly grown—why, I used to dread going to the works of a morning, couldn't think how I'd get through the day, and when the bell rang in the evening, I'd do a bolt out of doors like a mad thing!

*JOCK : Machines don't bother me. *I'm* the boss of the machine. When I'm

working in the factory I often think to myself : I'll teach that blasted old machine who's the boss. Let the damn thing whizz and creak and bang, so long as I'm driving it—driving it hard, driving it till it fairly sweats blood, as you might say. Makes me laugh to see it banging its old head off. Whoa, old horse, I say, smell the whip! You'll swallow anything I damn well feed you, and you'll turn out just what I tell you to. I'm the fellow who gives *you* orders, understand? Buck up, Gene, you've only got to be a man, to boss a machine.

★GENE (*softly*) : Sometimes in this world it's easier to be like God than to be a man.

★MAGGIE (*stares strangely at Jock*) : How you do excite yourself, Jock Rooster.

Jock *grunts deprecatingly*.

★GENE : It's not his *machines* he gets excited about.

★MAGGIE : What do you mean?

★GENE : Do you want me to tell you? It's women.

★JOCK : Well, why not? What else is there in the world for the likes of us? As soon as you're born, the old man starts cursing because there's another mouth to feed. When you go to school in the morning you're hungry; and when you go to bed at night your innards rumble with emptiness. And after that you go through the mill; sell your horse-power, like so much petrol, for the use of the boss. Turn yourself into a blasted hammer or a lever or a penholder or a flat-iron, as you might say. That's life, that is. What else is there? The only bit of fun a man gets out of it is women. No one can come interfering with *that*. A man's his own boss about that. He can tell the boss and the police and the lot of them to go to hell; this is where *I* come in; you keep off the grass! It's all very well for the rich; they get all sorts of fun—music, books, the seaside. But the likes of us? We read a book once in a while, but as for settling down to it day after day—we haven't the grit, we didn't learn enough for that at school. The same with music; grand opera is all very well, but give me a revue or something nice and bright like the Merry Widow—you know how it goes? (*Hums the opening of the Merry Widow waltz.*) Or a waltz on the pennyano in the pub to give you a dance with your girl—that's the stuff for me! Women mean ever so much more to us than they do to the rich. They're, as you might say, the kernel of life. And if that goes bad on you, you might as well go and hang yourself right away, mightn't you?

★GENE : I dare say——

★JOCK : You're a married woman, Missis, so there's no call to mince matters; and I say, what would a man like me get out of life if he couldn't go with his girl every day?

Gene *gazes intently at* Maggie.

What do you say to that, Missis?

★MAGGIE : I think . . . (*shyly*) I think women aren't all alike.

★GENE (*jumps up*) : I'll get work, Maggie, old girl. Never you fear. Then I'll be able to give you a Christmas present.

★JOCK : Waste of time—there's nothing doing.

★GENE : Just you wait and see, Jock, my lad! So long, Maggie.

*Goes out. A few moments of silence.*

★JOCK : A great hefty fellow like that—fit to go into the ring—shame that he can't get a job. And never gets down in the mouth about it. You're a lucky woman, aren't you?

★MAGGIE (*stares at him blankly*) : Yes.

★JOCK : I don't half envy Gene when I see you two together.

Maggie *drops her head on her hands and weeps.*

★JOCK : What's up, Missis? What have I said? I meant no harm. Why, you're crying! What is it? Shall I go and fetch Gene? I dare say I could catch him up.

★MAGGIE (*sobbing aloud*) : My head's bursting! I'm going off my head! I'll scream—I'll scream my head off!

★JOCK (*concerned*) : Are you ill? Can I do anything for you? Or maybe you're in the family way? It does take some women like that.

★MAGGIE : O my God—O my God—it's not that—(*laughs hysterically*) it's only that I'd be thankful to be lying in my grave!

★JOCK : What, isn't he good to you? Does he knock you about?

★MAGGIE : I'll tell—yes, I'll tell—I'll tell—I'm only a woman after all. . . . My man, my Gene—well, you see, my Gene isn't—he isn't properly a man at all. . . .

★JOCK : Are you sure you're not going to be ill, Missis? Maybe you're feverish?

★MAGGIE : Oh no. My Gene—it was in the war they did him in—and now he's a cripple, in a manner of speaking. Oh, I'm ashamed to tell you right out. You see—you see—he's not really a man any more, if you know what I mean. . . .

*She claps her hand on her mouth as if she were scared of her words as soon as they are understood.* Jock *gives one loud guffaw.*

*MAGGIE : Christ! What have I done now? You're laughing at me. Oh, for shame! How can you? I'd never have thought it of you.

*JOCK : Oh, excuse me, it just popped out—you know how things pop out? When you hear that sort of thing, you can't really help laughing. (*With pious indignation.*) But you know a man like that has no business to keep you—selfish of him, I call it—if he really cared for you he'd let you go.

*He begins to stroke* Maggie *and she leans up against him.*

*MAGGIE : It's not so easy as you think, Jock. It's not easy to know *what* to think. Sometimes you think one thing and sometimes another. I'm so *sorry* for him. Such a fine chap he was before the war. So full of life. But now he can't do anything but grouse from morning till night. Grousing at every one and every thing—even God. And when he looks at me, he looks right through me as if I weren't human at all. I might be a bit of furniture. Sometimes I'm really frightened to go near him—I can't abide him—it makes me sick to look at him. (*She shudders with disgust.*) O my God, what's to become of us?

*JOCK (*more and more tenderly*) : Have a good cry, my dear; that's right. Do you good. My mother always used to say, swallowing your tears only chokes you.

*MAGGIE : You won't tell him I told you? Promise? I'd do myself in.

*JOCK : Not a word, Maggie, trust me. I've done a month in prison before now because I'd promised to hold my tongue. You don't need to worry. A young woman like you—look at me—you can't stand another year of this, grieving the way you do. Maggie darling . . . darling Maggie. . . . (*Kisses her.*)

*MAGGIE : This is wickedness.

*JOCK : Wickedness? Not a bit of it; it's nature, that's what it is, human nature. The parsons and the gentry preach about sin—but *I* say it would be a sin to stick to that man—who isn't a man—a sin against nature. Anyway, faithful wives are another of their fairy tales. They keep that to preach to us on Sundays. But as for them—a friend of mine used to go with the bank manager's lady. . . .

*MAGGIE : There's some one on the stairs—if that's Gene. . . .

*JOCK : I'd better be off. Maggie, come round to my room one day. You know the address? There's nothing to be scared about, no one ever comes near the place. Come and talk things over and have a good cry—if you know what I mean? Won't you?

*MAGGIE : I don't know . . .

*JOCK : Do you remember how we used to play in the park and build castles on

the sand-heap, Maggie darling? I had my eye on you even in those days when you were nothing but a kid. Maggie darling, you'll come, won't you?

Maggie *shakes her head.*

(*With sudden brutality.*) Not so much fuss about it. You'll come!

*MAGGIE: I——

*JOCK: You shall!

*MAGGIE (*consenting*): Well . . .

*JOCK: So long, darling!

*Goes out.*

*MAGGIE: I'm only a woman after all. I don't rightly know . . . life's so hard.

CURTAIN.

# BROKENBROW : ACT TWO

## SCENE I

INDICATES THE OUTSIDE OF A TRAVELLING PEEP-SHOW. THE SHOWMAN IS SITTING ON A STOOL AMONG HIS POTS AND PANS. GENE STANDS BEFORE HIM.

★GENE (*pointing out a paragraph in a newspaper*) : There!

★SHOWMAN : What do you mean : " There "?

★GENE : It's printed here. (*He reads out the words laboriously in a sing-song voice.*) "Wanted : a powerful man for a sensational turn. Liberal remuneration. Only men in first-class condition need apply."

★SHOWMAN : That's right. Face the light, my man. (*Feels Gene's muscles.*) Biceps flabby. Chest—thighs—calves—flabby. But it's just the sort of thing I want. That fleshy sort of fake looks as powerful as a grizzly. That's first rate. You're hired. Shake.

★GENE : What have I got to do?

★SHOWMAN : Oh, that—simple, my boy! Listen to me. The public is fed up with sobstuff. Only conchies fall for it nowadays. That's not my idea of business. The public likes *blood*. Plenty of it. Christians or no Christians! Spells success in my business. Public interest and private interest go together. (*Picks up his flute.*) See that. (*Plays a few notes.*) Pap for old maids. Roses and raptures! Slobber and treacle. Bah! (*Seizes two drumsticks.*) See this? (*Begins to beat his drum.*) That's the stuff to give 'em. (*Goes on beating tattoos.*) The people eat it. Lap it up and wallow in it. (*More tattoos.*) Glory, Glory! That's the life!

★GENE : Do you mind telling me——

★SHOWMAN : Just coming to it. Here's a cageful of rats. And a cageful of mice. Your turn. There's a fortune in it. At every performance you take one rat and one mouse, bite a hole in their throats; take a suck of blood; flourish—and off! Brings the house down.

★GENE : Live animals. No, sir, I can't do it.

★SHOWMAN : Bunkum! Ten bob a day. All expenses found. All over in half an hour. Silly prejudices. All a matter of habit. Think of the perquisites. You'll paper your walls with proposals from flappers. Chuck your moral scruples overboard. Nowadays a girl's virtue is easily mended. Harley Street does the repairs.

*GENE (*greedily*) : Ten bob a day. . . .
*SHOWMAN : Beginning to nibble? (*Chuckles.*)
*GENE : It's foul, it's horrible—with live animals!
*SHOWMAN : Well, go and find another job—if you can. (*Chuckles.*) Nothing doing. What's it to be—yes or no?
*GENE (*choking*) : It's only—for my wife. (*Breaks out.*) You see, if a person loves you, and you're afraid you might lose her love, when it's all you have left . . . Isn't there any other work you could put me to, sir?
*SHOWMAN : Yes or no?
*GENE (*stammering and almost moaning*) : Oh—ten bob—oh—for the likes of us—it's just a bloody roundabout—round and round and on and on. . . . I'll do it, sir.
*SHOWMAN : That's talking! Mark my words : Prime Ministers and Field-marshals and parsons and circus managers know what's good policy : we give the public what it likes!

*The stage darkens.*

## SCENE II

FAINT CANDLELIGHT. THE OUTLINES OF JOCK AND MAGGIE ARE JUST VISIBLE AGAINST THE BACK WALL.

*JOCK : Do you love me?
*MAGGIE : You—you——
*JOCK : Gene thinks——
*MAGGIE : Leave him be. I hate him—hate him!
*JOCK : Funny things women! Why didn't you run away as soon as he came back—as soon as you knew?
*MAGGIE : Oh, I don't know. I don't remember. I think I was ashamed to let any one know.
*JOCK : Poor devil! When you come to think of it. . . .
*MAGGIE : You're not to think. I won't have it.
*JOCK : After all he's a pal of mine.
*MAGGIE : Don't—don't!
*JOCK (*after a while*) : What happened the first night he got home? Did he try to start anything?

*MAGGIE : Oh, stop it, Jock.

*JOCK : But even if he were healthy, you'd come to me, wouldn't you? . . . What are you getting up for? What's wrong?

*MAGGIE : God ought to strike you dumb—and me and him and every one. Words—words are nothing but torture now.

*The stage darkens.*

## SCENE III

A FAIR IS INDICATED. THERE IS A BOOTH SO BRIGHTLY PAINTED THAT IT DROWNS THE DIN OF THE BARREL-ORGANS AND BRASS BANDS. ON A PLATFORM IN FRONT OF THE BOOTH STANDS A TATTOOED WOMAN AND GENE, WHO IS DRESSED IN FLESH-PINK TIGHTS.

*SHOWMAN (*mouthing and rapping out his speech*) : Ladies and gentlemen. Walk up. Walk up closer. Listen, behold and admire! In the first act you will see Monachia the Tattooed Lady; she wears the greatest works of art of the old masters in front and the most modern, expressionist, futurist, dadaist confections behind. On her naked body. You won't only see her legs; you won't only see her arms; you won't only see her back : you'll see every single part of her, which by the laws of church and state may only be seen by ladies and gentlemen over eighteen years of age. Between the acts you will see a child being beheaded. A real live child. A thing you have never seen before. A thing you wouldn't see in Africa, nor in Asia, nor in Australia; a thing you can only see in Europe and America. Our last act (*points to Gene*) is Robot, the strong man of the Empire. Powerful as a grizzly bear. Devours live rats and mice before the very eyes of our esteemed public. The hero of the civilized world. The pride and power and manhood of the Empire. He can grind rocks to powder. He can hammer nails through the thickest skull with his bare fist. He can strangle thirty-two men with his finger and thumb. All fly before him. And all who fly must DIE. You haven't seen the world till you've seen him. . . . And we have more sensations for you. Sensations with petticoats as thin as spider's webs, not to be lifted out here. So walk up—walk up, ladies and gentlemen. We won't ask you to pay a shilling; we won't ask you to pay sixpence, thrippence a head is the entrance for to-day only. Owing to our unprecedented success the entrance is only threepence a

head. So walk up, walk up. First come, first serve. Last warning. The performance is about to begin. (*A bell rings.*) Cash ready. Thrippence a head. Walk up—walk up!

*A GIRL (*pointing at Gene*) : I say, Jess, what would you say to feeling his muscles?

*ANOTHER GIRL : Or his ribs. . . .

*SHOWMAN (*hears them*) : Certainly, ladies. Feel as much as you please. That's not stuffing; that's no fake. That's Robot, the incarnate might of Empire.

Jock *and* Maggie *come on with their arms round each other's waist. At first they don't see the booth. As they speak the din becomes inaudible but the crowd carries on its business in dumb show.*

*JOCK : This is the life! Are you enjoying yourself, Maggie? Isn't it glorious? Makes you glad to be alive. Like a turn on the roundabouts, Maggie? I'll stand you anything you like now.

*MAGGIE : It's like a dream—like a story-book. Six years of worrying, pinching and scraping and grieving I've had. Like a mole that doesn't dare show its nose above ground. Not that I ask for much, Jock. Don't think I expect a lot. A poor girl doesn't look for much, from the start. If you're lucky you work and work every day of your life till you're too old and have to come on your children. If you're not, you get nothing but grousing and rows and knocking about from your man. But this—this is more than I'd ever hoped for.

*JOCK : The beginning of a new life for you, Maggie.

*MAGGIE (*tenderly*) : I say, Jock——

*JOCK : What, Maggie?

*MAGGIE : Darling. (*Kisses him long and tenderly.*)

*JOCK (*with obvious self-satisfaction*) : You see, you don't mind all the people any more—bashfulness is just one of those notions as you might say——

*SHOWMAN (*makes his voice heard*) : Robot, the strong man of the Empire. (*His voice becomes inaudible again.*)

*MAGGIE : O Jock! Jock!

*JOCK : What's the matter?

*MAGGIE : Look there, do you see who that is?

*JOCK : Who?

*MAGGIE : That man in the tights.

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★JOCK : How should I know. An acrobat. One of these fellows out of a circus Here to-day and gone to-morrow.
★MAGGIE : That's *him.*
★JOCK : That's who?
★MAGGIE : Gene.
★SHOWMAN (*makes his voice heard*) : Devours live rats and mice before the very eyes of our esteemed customers. His country's hero. The pride of the Empire. Give us a tune on your muscles, Robot. Careful now—careful of the public.

Gene *begins sparring and showing the play of his muscles. The* Showman's *voice becomes inaudible.*

★JOCK : Did you ever hear of such a fraud! His country's hero—a man without —what they call a eunuch. (*Roars with laughter.*) That's the sort of hero they kept on the home front—the red tabs, the press correspondents, the glory-merchants, the diehards, the armchair patriots. . . . That's a fine show to make of a lump of padded putty!
★MAGGIE : Stop it, stop it. How can you be so heartless, Jock. What have I done. I'm worse than a street girl, I am. It's better to sell yourself than to sell your man.
★JOCK (*catches hold of Maggie's arm*) : Shut up. Don't be so soft.
★MAGGIE : Did you hear what he's doing? Eating live rats and mice. That man wouldn't hurt a fly if he could help it. He even lifted his hand to my mother for putting out the eyes of her goldfinch. He wouldn't let me set mouse-traps in the kitchen because it's wicked to torture animals. And now he has to eat live rats and mice.
★JOCK : Well, you don't have to kiss him any more, anyhow.
★MAGGIE : I want to kiss him, I'm going to kiss him—here and now—in front of every one. What have I done to him! Was it his fault that he stopped that bullet? It was my fault for letting him go to the war—his mother's fault—every one's fault—for letting such things happen.
★JOCK : Oh, shut up. People are looking at us. Come along or he'll see you.
★MAGGIE : I want him to see me. I'll kneel down and confess before God that I'm no better than a fallen woman. I'm a worm in his sight. Let me go, let me go to him.
★JOCK (*holding her close to him*) : And supposing it makes you sick to look at him?

*MAGGIE (*simply*) : Then I shall love him all the more.
*JOCK (*dragging her off*) : Oh, come along, you crazy bitch.
*SHOWMAN (*makes his voice heard again*) : Walk up, ladies and gentlemen—walk up and see all our astounding sensations. (*Goes into the tent.*)
A WORKING WOMAN (*to another*) : Because I'm taking those shirts to the pawnshop, you needn't think I haven't any more at home. I've got a solid pure silk cape that my grandmother left me. But there's nothing left to pawn but the shirts. . . . (*They stroll away.*)

Maggie *and* Jock *at the other side of the stage.* Jock *is holding on to* Maggie *who is hanging back.*

*MAGGIE : No.
*JOCK : You won't come?
*MAGGIE : No.
*JOCK : And supposing he finds out that you're going to have a baby?
*MAGGIE : He'll forgive me. He's always been kind.
*JOCK : He'll give you a good hiding!
*MAGGIE : I've got to do it. I know it is God's will. He has not quite forsaken me in the midst of my sins. This is my punishment, O Lord. Thy will be done. I will love Gene and serve him as if he were my Saviour.
*JOCK : Then I shall go straight to him——
*MAGGIE : We'll both go straight to him.
*JOCK : And tell him that you've been deceiving him.
*MAGGIE : It's no use threatening me, Jock. I won't go with you any more. I've never really called my life my own. When I was little I was always waiting for it to begin. And then I saw the world was full of things, wonderful, lovely things—things I couldn't properly get hold of; and anyhow they were so fine and so soft you wouldn't dare to touch them. You see my hands have always been all rough and dirty—they're only fit to hide under my apron. I didn't care for any one to see my hands. . . . But now, but now—I think there's nothing in the world that's fit to touch; it's all as dirty and as ugly as my hands.
*JOCK (*raging with wounded vanity*): Then you can go to hell, you snivelling cow! There are plenty more, I can tell you—I've only to hold up my little finger and they settle on me like bees.

*They are crowded off the stage. The* Showman *steps out of the booth with* Gene.

★SHOWMAN : Walk up, walk up, ladies and gentlemen. Hearken, behold and admire! Walk up, walk up!

*The stage darkens.*

## SCENE IV

INDICATES THE INTERIOR OF A MODEST PUBLIC-HOUSE. A STOUT, CHEERFUL, BUSTLING BARMAID SERVING BEHIND THE BAR. WOODEN TABLES AND BENCHES ROUND THE ROOM. TOM CALLOW, DICK FAITHFUL, BILL BEER AND OTHERS SIT AT THE TABLES. TWO WORKMEN, A STONEMASON AND A BRICKLAYER, STAND AT THE BAR. BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES, VOICES ARE HEARD QUARRELLING.

★STONEMASON : Not if there was to be a hundred Revolutions. Revolutions can't change nothing. A plumber's better than a plasterer, a blacksmith's better than a tinker, a linotype operator's better than a machine labourer, a taxi-driver's better than a van-driver. I'll always be a stonemason and you'll never be anything but a bricklayer.

★BRICKLAYER : Swank, I call it. All right, cocky—you won't mind me taking a drink alongside of your royal highness, I suppose? If I *am* a poor bloody bricklayer. And proud of it, mark you, proud of it I am.

★STONEMASON : A stone-cutter is an artist, I tell you; and a bricklayer's nothing but a common labourer.

★BRICKLAYER : We get put upon, same as you do. What's the odds?

★STONEMASON : Well, we've got something to show for it, we have. Didn't we get two bob a day more than you before the war? Doesn't that show you? No, no, bricklayers stick to your last, as they say! If you was to ask me to-day to take on your job—I wouldn't half laugh. Why, the nippers at home know better than that. No use trying to drag *me* down. Can't be done, Revolution or no Revolution.

*They pay and go out quarrelling.*

★BRICKLAYER : Bit too big for your boots, you are!

★STONEMASON : Garn, you're balmy!

★BRICKLAYER : Begging your lordship's pardon!

★STONEMASON : Suck it!

★TOM CALLOW : Workers of the world unite! " The enlightened proletariat recognizes no class distinctions "—yes, I don't think.

*He sees* Gene, *who has come in meanwhile and sits at a vacant table.*

Hallo, Gene; how did you get here?

*GENE (*in a hoarse and jerky voice*) : My throat's dry. There's a taste of blood—it's beastly, it fairly poisons you. Got to have a drink. Christ, I'm no teetotaler, what's there to gape at?

*CALLOW : Me? I'm not gaping. Why should I? *I* don't have to be poisoned before I step around to the pub. The kitchen at home is enough to drive any one to it—my drawing-room and dining-room and bathroom and laundry all rolled in one—*and* nursery full of wretched kids; and my wife nagging, nagging all day long—no thank you! Give me the pub. Not that husbands aren't to blame too for things being as they are. We go to meetings and talk our heads off about the brotherhood of man and the great times that are coming, and when we go home we haven't so much as a kind word to throw to our wives.

*While he is talking* Harry Burley *comes in. Hearing the last words,* Burley *begins talking as soon as he gets inside the door.*

*BURLEY : Nowadays, comrade, it's the fellows that own the grand houses that get all the fun. Twenty rooms a piece and then they're not satisfied! But the war started making things hot for them. (*With the impassioned rhetoric of the practised public speaker.*) At last they see the writing on the wall. At last they feel the earth quaking under their feet. They are shaking in their shoes, for their hearts are black but their faces are pale, and their teeth are chattering with fright. Comrades, at last the day is dawning!

*DICK FAITHFUL : But you've not found the true light, brother. The heavenly light comes from the city of God that is not built with hands. You seem to think that all of us working-men are bound to belong to your party. You people don't seem to know that some of us have found our own salvation.

*GENE : You see, Harry, you think it's easy to make people happy, but I've been doing a bit of thinking lately and it seems to me that you can't make every one happy—really happy that is. I think that happiness is something very hard to get, something (*he breathes heavily*) that a man either has or hasn't got.

*BURLEY : You're full of bourgeois ideology, comrade. It really makes me laugh to hear you. In accordance with economic laws, history is about to give birth to a new order of society. The tides are rising and the solid earth crumbles at their advance. So we shall change with changing conditions, until, almost without

noticing it, we have become part of the Socialist State. That's not a fairy tale, that's solid scientific fact. Everything is bound to work out according to our programme. Why shouldn't people be happy in the new order? It's perfectly simple. Instead of producing silks and satins for the idle rich, we shall set to work to produce serviceable woollens cheap enough for every one to be clothed and warm. Sensible living conditions will produce sensible people, and sensible people are happy. Humanity is rising from the realm of want to the realm of freedom. Surely that's simple enough. (*Turning to* Callow.) But people that think we can take short cuts and skip the logical historical development of events, crazy upstarts with wild sentimental theories instead of scientific facts——

*CALLOW : Will be solemnly denounced from the pulpit. I know, I know—you've got your formula and every one and everything has to fit it. I know all about your official sermons, but I tell you that what people need is the spirit of Revolution. If the spirit of Revolution is not in them, then all your historical developments and social conditions won't help them. And if they have that spirit of Revolution, then the new age will begin, whatever the conditions. It might be now, to-day. No need to wait for developments. You people are strong on discipline, but you have no leadership. Even when, by your own lights, " conditions " have been ripe for action, you've always fallen down on the job.

*FAITHFUL: Neither is your light the true light, brother. I have been born again. I have seen the heavenly light, and my feet are set upon the straight and narrow way.

*BILL BEER : What I say is, let me alone and I won't ask nothing better. Peace and quiet is all I ask. But any one who comes monkeying with me—he'd better look out, that's all!

*BURLEY (*answering* Callow) : You're not a regular socialist at all, Tom. You're nothing but an anarchist. That's why you can't talk like a responsible being. It's not worth arguing with you until you've at least joined a Party. And as for you, Dick, you're not even class-conscious yet; you're simply fumbling about in the dark. I tell you : proper social conditions is all we need. The rest is simple.

*GENE (*answering* Burley) : It may be simple. Perhaps you're right. What you said about silks and satins is just my idea. People can't act rightly as long as they haven't enough to eat. The first thing you've got to give a man is enough to eat and a roof over his head, and a little bit more than that—a share of the things

that make life worth living for any one. Till you give him those things you can't expect that he'll act rightly. Perhaps it's just that I'm not so clever as you, comrade. It isn't so easy for me to see how simple it all is. And you're a branch secretary, so you're bound to understand these things better. (Burley *shows signs of taking this amiss.*) I'm not saying anything against the Party. For a working man the Party means a deal more than it does for the other sort. For the rich it's just politics, but for us—well, it might go wrong, there might be really bad rotten spots on it—but all the same it would be—the Party. That means just *everything* for us—all we believe and hope and dream. . . . But look here, supposing a man had something the matter with him that couldn't be cured—something the matter with him inside—or outside, for that matter—that could never get better—would it make him happy if there were to be sensible social conditions?

*BURLEY : I'm afraid I don't understand that question.

*GENE : Sorry, I'm afraid I've been a bit muddled in my head since I got my bullet. You see—there's such a lot to understand. Every day of your life things creep up and drag at you and—bowl you over. And all that is too much to get hold of in words—in thoughts. Things are so queer, when you come to think of it. Everything—being alive at all, I mean. It's so queer, it frightens you. There don't seem sense in it somehow. I don't see how a man is to get hold of it at all. Trying to get hold of yourself is like trying to bail out the sea with a pail. You go on living and you understand what it's all about; and then, when you look back, it's quite different and not like it seemed at the time. Sometimes you say to yourself: Well, I'm just a bit of the world—as it might be the tree outside the window—and there's no more sense in trying to get to the bottom of things—asking, What am I? and Why am I alive? and What does everything mean?—than it would be to ask questions like that about a tree that was growing. There it is, and that's all about it. But all the same I don't see my way—I'm all mixed up—like the world in the Bible before God created the waters and the dry land. All mixed up and all dark. And I keep thinking of it—day in, day out. But look here, I want to tell you—I want to explain . . . you see—take the men that got smashed up in the war—what's to become of them?

*BURLEY : Why, they'll be supported by the Socialist State. They will be fed and clothed, and there's no reason why they shouldn't be as well off as any one else.

★GENE : But supposing a man had no arms?
★BURLEY : He'd be given artificial arms. If he could do any work, he'd be given some easy job.
★GENE : But supposing he had no legs either?
★BURLEY : The Socialist State would look after him just the same.
★GENE : But supposing there was something the matter with his mind?
★BURLEY (*with a robust lack of sentimentality*) : Then he'd have to go into an asylum. But mind you, not the sort of asylum we have now, where people are treated like dumb brutes. People who are ill will be treated kindly—treated like human beings.
★GENE : I don't mean mad people. I mean people who aren't ill, exactly, but who have something hurting them — in their souls—if you take my meaning.
★BURLEY : There are no such people. People with healthy bodies have healthy souls. Common sense will tell you that. And people who are not right in their heads belong in an asylum.
★GENE : There's another thing I wanted to ask. Supposing—(*he swallows nervously*) supposing a man had lost his—manhood, as you might say. Supposing *that* had been blown off in the war. What do you think would become of him in a Socialist State?

Bill Beer *sniggers.*

★BURLEY (*mopping his brow*) : What questions you do ask! Makes me go all hot and cold. Nothing to laugh at, Comrade Beer. That sort of thing does happen sometimes.
★CALLOW : That sort of thing makes you feel more like crying than laughing.
★FAITHFUL : A man like that would be bound to find grace; God in His mercy would not leave him in outer darkness.
★BURLEY : Well, if I'm to answer that question—as far as I know science hasn't answered that question yet—oh! stop a moment—what a fool I am! There won't *be* any wars under the new order. That's the answer. Plain common sense.
★GENE : Not so plain as all that. When the new order comes, there may be people like that already in the world. How are they going to be happy? Or the same thing might happen to a man if he had an accident at the works or some other way. How could he be happy?

*BURLEY : That's another devilish difficult question.

*CALLOW : Seems to me you're just trying to pick holes. Better not worry your head about things like that. Soldiers of the Revolution have no business to muddle themselves with such ideas. Accidents like that can't be helped. Casualties have to be sacrificed. The Movement demands sacrifices.

*GENE : That's true enough. But there's no reason why one shouldn't talk over these things. Because these things do happen to some people. And while we're talking about it, I think the answer—well, I could tell you a story about a man. He was nothing special—not a delegate or anything. Just one of the rank and file. A working man. A friend of mine he was. I thought a lot of him. He got married when he was twenty. Met his wife at the works. They were a good-looking couple. It was a pleasure to see them together. She was ever such a pretty little thing and he was a great powerful chap. More powerful than I am even. Then the war started and they turned him into a blinking hero. He hadn't any kids. Wasn't earning enough for that. Before the war he thought a lot of his wife, of course; but it wasn't till he got into the trenches that he really found out *how* much. She was so sweet—such pretty ways—such a good wife to him. It made him go all queer to think about her when he was out there. He was always thinking about her. And after a bit he began to think: wouldn't it be nice if we had a youngster?—or two, or three. Boys and girls. She'd make a splendid mother, she would. You see, he was forgetting what a large family really means when you can't make both ends meet. And no wonder—the way we have to live! The things a man would like to know about—the country, fields and trees, the truth about things—how's a working man to find out about them? Work, work from morning till night, ever since you were *so* high. And of a Saturday night you go and see a pack of lies on the movies. About working girls who marry dukes and live happy ever after, and all that silly muck. Christ, what a way to live! When you come to think of it. Never get a chance at anything that isn't cheap and nasty and secondhand. Pack drill, that's what it is—not life. Well, as I was saying : one day he stopped a bullet. Nothing much, just a nice little blighty wound, so he thought. He hadn't had any leave yet. When he got to hospital he started feeling round his bandages. But he didn't think nothing of it. Till he heard some one say—in the next bed—" Hallo ", they said, " our eunuch is waking up. He'll get a nasty jar when he finds out what they've done to him." And he thought to himself : they can't be talking about me, surely?

What do they mean by that? A eunuch, that's. . . . And he lay still again, quite still; and shut his eyes. The way you turn your head when you don't want to look at something horrible. But he didn't go to sleep the whole of that night. And next morning they told him. Well, the first few days he yelled the house down—more like an animal it was—till, all of a sudden, he heard himself and noticed he was squeaking and squealing—like a woman. So he shut up. He tried to think about his wife, but as soon as he thought of her he had to shut his eyes and lie down stiff and still the way he did the first day, and shut his eyes. He meant to hang himself. But he didn't have the nerve. So he was sent home. He came along to me first. Because we were pals. Asked me how he was to break it to his wife? Fair gave me the creeps, he did. So *that's* the sort of thing you are, I thought to myself. I was sorry for him, but all the same, he gave me the creeps. If you looked at it one way, it was rather funny. I didn't know what to say to him. I saw him with his wife. I saw what a bad time he was having. But what can you really see that's going on inside a man? There you sit and here I sit. I see you. But what do I see? A man shakes hands with you; you hear him say something; and that's all. What do I really know about you? And what do you really know about me? Nothing. Nothing! (*He breaks out.*) I tell you that man must have been in hell. Fair bleeding his heart away. It's a wonder he managed to go on living at all. . . . Then, one day, he came to see me and you couldn't help noticing how much better he looked. Lovely, he looked. It doesn't sound right to say a man looks lovely. But that man did. Fair shining with happiness he was. You could almost *feel* it. Just because he'd found out that his wife didn't look down on him. She wasn't hating him. She wasn't laughing at him. He didn't care what she did—after all, she was a healthy woman, and he was a cripple—as long as he knew that she loved him just the same. And that woman loved him. You'd hardly think it was possible—but that woman loved—as you might say—his soul.

*Silence.* Jock Rooster *comes in manifestly intoxicated.*

★JOCK : Evening all. What's up? You all lost your tongues? Let's have a tune.

*Puts coin in the automatic piano, which begins to whine and wheeze and groan and rattle out a marching tune.* Jock *sits at* Gene's *table.*

★JOCK : Evening, Gene.
★GENE : Evening.

*JOCK (*speaking thickly, with the inarticulacy of intoxication*) : Don't wonder your Maggie gave you the go-by . . . you (*snorts with laughter*)—you bleeding hero!

*GENE : What say?

*JOCK : The in-incarnate might of the Empire! (*Laughs.*) Devours live rats and mice! (*Laughs.*)

*GENE : How do you know that? Quiet, Jock—it's too horrible, what I'm doing. I couldn't *tell* you how horrible it is. I'd rather bite through my own veins than do it. There's things that ought not to be allowed. And there am I doing it. . . . You see, it's like this : Maggie isn't strong in health. You know my pension doesn't go far. It's not my fault that we're out of work. But you see, if a man can't provide for his wife, can't even give her enough to eat, she's liable to take a dislike to him. I've noticed that often with women. And there's no call for her to put up with *that*. So, you see. . . . Promise me you won't say a word to Maggie. Promise, Jock.

*JOCK : Promise.

*GENE : Maggie is a queer girl. If she was to find out that I've sucked rats' blood she might—I don't know—it would turn her stomach.

*JOCK (*with sudden and solemn indignation*) : But look here—that stuff about the strongest man and the pride of the Empire—that's what I call a bloody swindle. You'll have the police after you.

*GENE (*suspiciously*) : What do you mean by that?

*JOCK : You know quite well what I mean. What's more, I promised not to tell because I don't *have* to tell Maggie. She's seen you.

*GENE (*agitated*) : Seen me? What did she say? Did she cry? (*Urgently.*) Tell me what she said, can't you?

*JOCK : Cry? What the hell is there to cry about? She laughed. It made her a bit sick at first, but then she laughed.

*GENE (*going to pieces completely*) : Turned her stomach—and then she laughed. . . . (*Hysterically.*) La—la—la—laugh, oh—ha—ha—la—laughed. . . . She laughed!

*JOCK : Well, isn't it laughable, I ask you? He makes himself out to be the strongest man in the world when he isn't a man at all. (*Laughs.*) Not a man at all!

*GENE (*shocked into perfect self-control*) : Who—who told you that?

*JOCK : Who told me? Maggie told me.

*GENE : When did she tell you?
*JOCK : At the fair.
*GENE : How did you two come to be at the fair?
*JOCK : Well, what do you expect? A young woman like that. Is she never to have a bit of fun? I'd be ashamed of myself, I would—asking questions like that.
*GENE : *I* ought to be ashamed of myself?
*JOCK : Do you think it's for me to be ashamed of myself? Or Maggie? What right have you to hang on to her, anyway? She's got grounds for divorce, she has. Even the Catholic Church would allow that.
*GENE (*quickly*) : That's true. I forgot about that. Your King and Country needs you—and smashes you up—and when you're properly smashed your wife has grounds for divorce. I'd forgotten that's the way things are worked. Well, what are you going to do about it? With Maggie, I mean?
*JOCK : None of your business.
*GENE. That's true again. It's none of my business. Nothing but a ground for divorce, that's all I am. . . . But supposing Maggie was a stranger and I was asking you as a friend : what are you going to do about it?
*JOCK (*mulishly*) : Just what I please.
*GENE : But Maggie's not a whore. I mean, these things can be fixed up—they're bound to be—I see that now. I'll give her up. Then you'll marry her?
*JOCK : That's not what she's after. She only wants a bit of fun now and then. And the sooner you know it the better. And if she doesn't get enough fun with me, I'll send her on the streets. Then I'll be in clover.
*GENE (*softly but in fierce anger*) : You swine, you!
*JOCK : Oh, I'm a swine, am I? Do you really think I'd let her go on the streets. Call yourself a friend of mine!
*CALLOW : What's up, you two? What's the use of having words at the pub. Go home and take it out of your wives!
*JOCK : We weren't having words, we were having a joke.
*CALLOW : Well, if that was a joke I'd like to hear you when you're rowing.
*JOCK : You see, we went to the fair and——
*GENE (*grips him by the arm*) : Jock—stop it. For my sake, for Maggie's sake——
*JOCK : And there we saw the most powerful man in the world. A whale of a lad. He devoured live rats and mice, he did——

★CALLOW : A black heathen would know better than to go and look at that!
★JOCK : And when I came to look at this chap I found he was a man I know. It would have made a cat laugh—the most powerful man in the world turned out to be a man I knew who had had both his—(*gesture of taking aim*)—bing! bang! —well it wasn't a man at all, it was one of these chaps they call eunuchs!

*All those present, including* Faithful, *give a loud snort of laughter.* Gene's *wide tormented eyes are enthralled by their laughter.*

★JOCK (*shouting across the laugh*) : That man was——

Gene *interrupts him. He rises and stands in a pool of light. At first he speaks heavily and, even in the heat of his passion, has to grope for words; but in the end his speech is overwhelming in its simplicity.*

★GENE : That man was Brokenbrow. Laugh. Laugh, all of you. Go on. *She* laughed. You don't often see a freak of nature. A real live eunuch. Shall I give you a song? (*Sings in a shrill, squeaky voice.*)

" The hours I spent with thee, dear heart,
Are as a string of pearls to me ". . . .

I sing almost as well as a blinded goldfinch, don't I? . . . Fools! You don't know what it feels like—torture. What a change there'd have to be before you could build a better world. You fight the bosses; you're full of talk about the rich being selfish and mean, and set up with themselves, but you're every bit as bad as they are. You hate each other because one of you swears by one programme and one by another. No one trusts his neighbour. No one trusts himself. Everything you do is smothered with envy and treachery.

You have nothing but fine words—wonderful, holy words. " Peace and plenty ". Words are all very fine for people in good health. But you don't see the places you can't reach. There are people you *can't* make happy with all your states and society and family and community. Your remedies end where our suffering begins.

Men stand alone;
A great pit opens where there is no help,
And in the sky there is no happiness,
The trees are thick with mockery
And the waves beat out " ridiculous "!
A darkness chokes you where there is no love,
And there is nothing to be done.

*There is silence for a few moments.* Gene *stumbles out.*

★CALLOW : Where are you off to?

★GENE (*his face distorting his words*) : The woman laughed.

*Goes out.*

*The stage is in twilight and the Scene hurries to its end.*

★BURLEY (*rushing to the door*) : Gene, I say, Gene! He's gone. If I'd only known. Conditions are all wrong, that's the trouble.

★FAITHFUL (*rapturously*) : I have sinned against the light. I have made mock of the crucified.

★JOCK (*in a maudlin whine*) : I say, we ought to do something for him——

★BILL BEER : You're a swine, you are, and no mistake.

★CALLOW (*jumps up suddenly*) : It's all quite simple. No, nothing is simple. . . . Bill please, miss.

CURTAIN.

# BROKENBROW: ACT THREE

## SCENE I

INDICATES A STREET IN THE WEST END. TWILIGHT. THE CURTAIN RISES ON BROKENBROW CLINGING TO A LAMP-POST. A LITTLE BOY COMES UP TO HIM.

★BOY: My sister's just thirteen.

★BROKENBROW (*absently*): Is that so?

★BOY: Sister's pretty. Sister's just thirteen.

★BROKENBROW (*mechanically*): You hungry?

★BOY: Sister's got a room of her own. Sister's just thirteen.

Brokenbrow *buys buns from a street vendor—an old woman—and gives them to the boy.*

★BROKENBROW: So your sister's thirteen. . . . And how old are you?

★BOY: Seven. (*Eating the buns.*) Thanks, mister. All the same—no use talking to *you*—slow in the uptake, you are.

*The boy runs away. The street lamps brighten. People pass along the street. The* Showman *comes on dressed in an evening overcoat and a top hat, slightly intoxicated.*

★SHOWMAN: Hullo. Why, that's Brokenbrow. I say, old man. Shouldn't show yourself in the street. Mustn't make yourself cheap. Ought to pay at the door for looking at you. Star turn. Sweep the country. Sensational discovery. What you gaping at? Seen a ghost?

★BROKENBROW: Yes, sir. . . . Murder is walking the world. Look around you, look around. My eyes are opened now. They stabbed my eyes open. What a glare. Dark. I want the dark. Let it be dark.

★SHOWMAN: Pull yourself together, man. Been drinking? Too many whiskies. Take my advice, my boy. Stick to beer. Two pints of beer's better than two double whiskies. Whisky's good business for the pubs but damn bad business for the public.

★BROKENBROW: Good business for me, sir. They stabbed my eyes open. I see it all—down to the ground, down to the naked ground. I see what men are. I see what the world is. It's war again, sir. Men stabbing men and laughing. Men stabbing men and laughing.

*SHOWMAN : Well, well, if you see all that you must see the war's a back number now. Peepshow "the horrors of the war" won't earn sixpence. Nowadays Progress is the word. Hundred per cent. All the rage. Full steam ahead and pat me on the back. Look about you, man. Got to make good nowadays. Show your paces. Spirit of the age. Doesn't matter what it is: boxing, politics, stock exchange, golf champion, copper king, movie star, prophet, jockey, antisemite, agitator, advertising man. Business booming. Take time by the forelock. No pitch so black it won't wash off. Morality : free sample given away with every packet. (*Laughs.*) Cuddled a nigger woman once. There's a race for you. . . . Well, so long. See you at nine sharp to-morrow.

*BROKENBROW : No, sir. That's finished.

*SHOWMAN : Don't make me laugh. That *would* be good 'un! Now that you've got your hand in? Now you can do it on your head? Like clockwork. (*Sings the tune of the "British Grenadiers".*)

"Of all the world's great heroes
There's none that can compare"—

(*Imitates gesture and sound of biting and sucking.*) Ladies and gentlemen, like a taste of blood? (*Sings.*) "With a tow row, row row, row row." Come again, ladies and gentlemen. Pass your plates up. Don't be bashful. Well, well, Robot—go home and sleep it off.

*BROKENBROW : Begging your pardon, sir, I can't come back. The advance you gave me—I'll settle up. . . . Can't have people saying I cheated them. Got to set my house in order.

*SHOWMAN : What? D'you mean to say you're serious? Come, come, my man, a joke's a joke, but you can't get away with this. Got you under contract for the season, haven't I? (*Brutally.*) Set the police on you. Drive you to work. Free exchange and barter. Foundation of society. Violation of sacred rights. Got law and order behind me. Nothing doing. Either you turn up at nine sharp to-morrow or I turn you over to the police. (*His voice softens.*) There, there, Brokenbrow, it's all for your own good. Want to keep you out of gaol.

*BROKENBROW : Gaol, is it? Those rats and mice I murdered—they were in gaol before they went to the scaffold. And there are people going about like free men who are only walking up and down in gaol—like beasts in a cage. Barred windows that let no light come through. Walls that choke the life out of you. Chains that eat into your flesh. Oh, I'm not afraid of gaol, sir. And anyway

(*screaming with hate*) you, sir, you're a devil. I do believe you are the evil one himself. Stuffing people with blood. Stripping people of shame. I . . . I . . . (*threatening gesture*) Oh! I . . . (*gesture of despair*). But there'll be other men who'll—who'll . . . . And, you know, there's a woman too. A woman who laughed at me. My woman. (*Savagely.*) Been laughing a long while now, that woman. Going to cry for a change. But they're all deaf—their ears are stopped with laughing.

★SHOWMAN (*taken aback*) : Well, I never! You wouldn't think that chap could string ten words together, and here he is tub-thumping with the best of them. What's wrong with me? What have I done? Solid business man like me. Backbone of the country. (*Jovially.*) Can't take you seriously, though. You're tipsy. Have it out with you to-morrow. Hustle along, have a good time and get a move on. Otherwise you'll find yourself stranded. Man with your gifts! So long—you old hit of the season, you. See you to-morrow.

Showman *goes off.*

★BROKENBROW (*alone*) : To-morrow—he says: to-morrow—just as if there had to be a to-morrow. I see. I see. At last, I see. Oh! light—my eyes—my poor eyes. . . .

Brokenbrow *breaks down completely. From now on the Scene becomes a nightmare pressing upon his disordered mind. The figures crowd in upon him as in a dream, and are re-absorbed by the surrounding darkness.*

*One-armed and one-legged veterans of the war with barrel-organs advance concentrically upon* Brokenbrow, *nonchalantly singing :*

"They put us in the army and they handed us a pack,
They took away our nice new clothes and dressed us up in kakh,
They marched us twenty miles and more to fit us for the war.". . .

*They suddenly stand still. One after another they shout at each other.*

My beat!

*No one gives way to the others. They all shout together:*

My beat!

*There is a moment of silence. Since no one gives way they all sit down suddenly as at a word of command and begin to sing and turn their barrel organs. Presently they get up and march against each other as if they were storming a barricade.*

*Filled with revolutionary ardour and wildly turning their barrel organs they begin to sing:*

"To hell with the Kaiser,
To hell with the Czar,
To hell with Lloyd George,
And also G. R."

*The barrel organs crash together. The men recoil and return to the assault. Military police come running up and shout:*

Law and order! Your King and Country need you! Right about—turn!

*Sudden silence. The sound of these familiar words quiets the veterans. They turn about as at the word of command and march around the stage, each in his own separate orbit, turning their barrel organs and singing:*

"It's a long way to Tipperary," etc. etc.

*Newspaper boys run across the stage.*

★FIRST BOY: Evening special! Sensational news! New night-club opened. Stomach dances. Jazz. Champagne. American bar.

★SECOND BOY: Evening edition! Latest sensation. Jews massacred in Galicia. Synagogue burnt down. A thousand burnt to death.

★VOICE: Cheers! Down with the Jews.

★THIRD BOY: Trixie Try. Most beautiful film star in the world. Trixie Try featuring in drama of crime: "The Passionate Murderess". Sensational. Brutal. Whips the senses.

★FOURTH BOY: Plague in Finland. Mothers drown their own children. Sensational reports. Outbreak of mob violence. Government sending troops to preserve law and order. A hundred armoured cars leave for Finland.

★FIFTH BOY: Spirit of the Empire. Progress of Civilization. Revival of Christianity. Stirring film drama: The Passion of our Lord. Featuring world-famous star. Gladys Gladeyes in the part of our Saviour. Two-million-dollar production. Preceded by Dempsey-Carpentier fight.

★SIXTH BOY: Greatest discovery of the Twentieth Century. "Levitite." Scientific miracle. Record-breaking poison-gas. Flight squadron now able to wipe the largest city, men, women and children, off the face of the earth. Inventor given honorary degree by all European Universities. Pope confers title on inventor.

★SEVENTH BOY: Dollar slumping! Dollar slumping! Rising birthrate anticipated. Latest statistics. Great triumph for Professors of Repopulation.

★EIGHTH BOY: Popular insurance competition. Pays one hundred per cent dividend. Solution of economic problems. Solution of the Class War.

*Two old Polish Jews cross the stage.*

★FIRST JEW: It's the old story. They flogged us. They dragged us out of bed in the black darkness. They took our women and girls. The hand of God has smitten us.

★SECOND JEW: Smitten us, is right. Call us the Chosen People. Chosen for the good God's whipping-post.

*They go off.*

★A LITTLE LOVE-MACHINE: He was so sweet—nothing but a kid—so I stayed all night—he hadn't more than a couple of bob to give me.

★HER BULLY: I'll push in your face next time you start acting soppy—going with a man for love!

★LOVE-MACHINE: Give us a chance! I'm ill, you know. . . .

*They go off.*

★OLD WOMAN SELLING CAKES: The second coming of my Saviour is at hand. Do not deny my Saviour, sir. All my hope is in Him, and the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

★BUYERS: And eats up all your savings!

★OLD WOMAN: Who cares for filthy lucre, sir. An old wreck like me can't be worse off. The trials of this world don't trouble me. I've drunk the dregs of them and my soul is thirsting for deliverance. I know that my Redeemer liveth.

*They go off.*

*Street vendor approaches a young man with stiff collar and monocle.*

★VENDOR: Latest remedy for weak men: Cantharoids.

★MONOCLE: I always use Damianox.

★VENDOR: That's not made any more. Proved unprofitable. All flavour, no nourishment. Now being sold for boot polish.

*They go off.*

★CRIES: A man taken ill!
Had a stroke!
Police!

★VOICES : That's that Robot from the fair. Comes of drinking all that blood. No wonder!

★A GUARDSMAN : One of those bloody reds, I expect. Lazy swine. We'd have made short work of him in Ireland. Put a gun in his hand and make the blighter blow his own head off. Or bash it in for him. At the word of command : fall in and salute the flag. Those rotters have got to come to heel. Need a touch of the whip.

★CAVALRYMAN : Great mistake to take prisoners. Our orders were: take him round the corner, kick his bottom to make him jump, and pot him in the back. " Prisoner shot while attempting to escape."

*Street-walkers come running from all directions.*

★FIRST PROSTITUTE : Robot can sleep with me. Take him to my place. I'll give him a glass of wine to set him up.

★SECOND PROSTITUTE : No, take him to my place.

★THIRD PROSTITUTE : To mine. To mine.

★FOURTH PROSTITUTE : You old hag, you. Of all people! Haven't even got your discharge from hospital. Be off with you.

*3rd and 4th Prostitutes begin fighting. Military music in the next street. Drums and fifes. Then brass and drums.*

(*Screeching.*) Soldiers! Soldiers! Hip, hip, hurrah!

*Every one leaves* Brokenbrow *and rushes off. The street is empty. The street lamps darken at the sound of the band—which recedes slowly.*

Brokenbrow *gets up.*

★BROKENBROW : Infinite skies above me . . .
Everlasting stars. . . .

*The stage darkens.*

## SCENE II

INDICATES GENE'S HOME. TOM CALLOW STANDS BY THE TABLE WAITING. EUGENE BROKENBROW COMES IN CARRYING A SMALL PARCEL. HIS EYES SHINE FEVERISHLY AND HIS MOVEMENTS ARE SWIFTER AND FREER THAN IN THE EARLIER SCENES.

★TOM : I've been waiting to tell you, Gene—the reason——

★GENE: No need to give me reasons, Mister Callow; I've no use for reasons. I've gone further than that. Do you know what this is?

★TOM: How should I know?

★GENE: The Fact. Not reasons. Fact. I looked into a shop window. I could hardly believe my eyes. Didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Thought I must be dreaming. But no, there it was; in the window. I went in and asked why they put it there. That's an image of Priapus, the salesman said. The ancient Greeks and Romans, he said, worshipped him as a god. The women? I said. Men and women both, he said. I asked if it was for sale. Yes. By instalments? They didn't do business like that, he said. Beg pardon, I said, a working man is so used to it. So I left my watch and took the image.

Gene *takes the little bronze image out of its wrappings and puts it on the mantelpiece. Lights a candle beside it.*

★TOM (*coaxing him*): You aren't feeling well, Gene—I can see you're not yourself.

★GENE: Quite well.

★TOM: You know I think I'll stay till your wife comes in.

★GENE: How these Christians love one another!

★TOM: How do you mean?

★GENE: Just a moment. Did you ever see people walking along the street?

★TOM: Funny questions you do ask.

★GENE: You go along the streets, day after day, like a blind man. And then, all of a sudden, you *see*. Souls. Do you know what souls look like? Not like living creatures. One's a ghost, another's a machine, the third's a cash register, the fourth a brass-hat. . . . I say, did you ever put out the eyes of a goldfinch? (*Without waiting for an answer.*) The sins of the mothers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. That's what the Book says, doesn't it? Good night, Tom. No offence meant. . . . I know, I know—reasons—fact.

★TOM: I'd better stay.

★GENE: Go, go. Maggie's just coming. All that I said in the pub—it was only because I'd had a couple.

★TOM: Oh, well—good night then, Gene.

★GENE: Good night, Tom. . . . Just a moment. How long have you been married?

★TOM: Twenty-three years.

★GENE: There was a time when you were thinking of getting a divorce, weren't you?

★TOM: I did once. But we got kind of used to each other. There were the children, too.

★GENE: Yes, of course, children. . . . Divorce is what they call "separation from bed and board", isn't it?

★TOM: That's what they call it.

★GENE: And your wife's religious, isn't she?

★TOM: Never misses church on Sunday. What's a man to do about it? As far as I'm concerned, let her go it if it amuses her. . . . (*at the door*). Good night, Gene.

Tom Callow *goes out.* Gene *alone.*

★GENE (*to the image*): They have none other gods but thee. It's all lies and fooling when they pray to the Crucified. They only pray to thee. All their Hail-Marys rise to thee, all their Our-Fathers make a ring of roses round thy nakedness; and their processions are nothing but a dance to honour thee. Thou art no hypocrite, thou dost not hide thyself in lying words. Thou art Alpha and Omega, the first thing and the last. Thou art the truth, thou art the god of all. . . . Thou hast cast off thy servant, O my god, but thy servant builds thee an altar. . . . I do believe he's laughing. Go on, laugh, that's right, laugh! They laughed at me for no reason. But *you* may laugh, *you* have the right to laugh at me for ever and ever, amen. (*Noise on the stairs.*) That's Maggie . . . dark night is coming and my eyes are going blind.

*Old* Mrs. Brokenbrow *comes in.*

★MRS. BROKENBROW: Good evening.

★GENE: Oh—you! Good evening, mother. What are you doing here at this time of night? When did you start going out in the evening? Is it because the night's so fine and warm? The birds were flying low. We shall have thunder soon.

★MRS. BROKENBROW: He's come back.

★GENE: Who has?

★MRS. BROKENBROW: Father.

★GENE: Whose father?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : Your father.

★GENE : Mother, what are you talking about? My father died when I was six months old. You've told me that again and again.

★MRS. BROKENBROW : I told you lies. But he *was* dead—dead to me. It happened when you were only six months old. You weren't weaned yet. One night he came home the worse for drink. Arm in arm with a woman he'd picked up in the street. He shouted at me. " Be off ", he said, " go and sleep with the old people. I want something a bit livelier alongside of me. You give me the hump ever since you've thrown a pup." I couldn't believe my own eyes. There he stood—not my own husband, but a beast, a wild beast, coming to tear me to pieces and take away my child. I took a carving-knife to him. But he just laughed at me and went off with his woman. He didn't come back that night, or the next. He just went off and left me as if we'd never met. So I went on the streets to earn money for you. I wasn't so bad-looking in those days. And to-day——

★GENE : To-day?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : He came back. In rags and tatters, rotten and lousy with dirt. He was on his last legs when he felt his way into the room. I knew his step on the stairs. What are you coming here for after twenty-nine years, I said. He mumbled like an idiot—the nasty old man. " Don't hit me ", he said. And then : " I've come back home to die ".

★GENE : And what did you say to him, mother?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : I told him to undress and go to bed. There were clean clothes in the drawers and hot water on the stove and soap on the sink.

★GENE : Then you've forgiven him?

★MRS. BROKENBROW (*harshly*) : I'll never forgive him. I'll look after him till he dies. That's nothing but my duty. When he dies, I'll close his eyes—no stranger shall do that for him. But when they come and carry him away in his coffin to the cemetery, then I shall draw the blinds and lock the door and I shan't follow him to his grave. (*Triumphantly.*) Strangers shall bury him. That'll be my revenge for what he's done to me.

★GENE (*after a moment*) : What was it that hurt most, mother. Going short of food while he spent his wages at the pub?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : No.

★GENE : Bringing home that woman off the streets?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : No.

★GENE : Was it when he laughed at you while you were standing there cut to the heart?

★MRS. BROKENBROW : Yes, Gene, that was the worst thing of all.

★GENE : You're right, mother. I'll have nothing to do with him and I won't follow him to his grave either.

*Silence.*

★MRS. BROKENBROW : Gene, I've got to have a suit of clothes for your father.

★GENE : Here, you can have my Sunday suit for him.

*Takes suit from cupboard and gives it to* Mrs. Brokenbrow.

★MRS. BROKENBROW : That'll fit him. . . . You know, father was always very particular about his clothes. . . . Is Maggie in?

★GENE : She'll soon be back. . . . Mother, you've got your troubles to bear and I've got mine. But you can tell about yours—but I don't dare say a word for fear they'd laugh at me.

★MRS. BROKENBROW : We all have to bear our troubles. No one gets let off. Life's too strong for us, Gene. I must be getting back. Father'll be getting hungry. Good night.

★GENE : Good night, mother.

Mrs. Brokenbrow *goes out.*

★GENE : That was the worst of all—laughing at her when she was cut to the heart. Didst thou hear it, thou great god? Art thou content with the burnt sacrifices of thy servants? Father the whore's champion. Wife the little chuckling pigeon, billing and cooing for thee. Shall we dance before thee? Drink rat's blood for a threepenny entrance and dance for two human lives.

Gene *begins to dance, rhythmically hopping from one leg to the other, his arms swinging loose, at first slowly, but soon with a wild and rapid rhythm.*

★GENE : Hop, skip and jump—hurrah.
Walk up, ladies and gents.
Cash at the door—hurrah.
The more the merrier—hip, hip, hip.

*He breaks into hysterical laughter and drops on to a footstool. After a moment* Fanny *comes in.*

★FANNY : Good evening. Maggie not in?

★GENE : No.

★FANNY: You don't half look blue, sitting there. Such a wonderful night out —warm as anything. I'm going dancing. Care to come along?

★GENE: You, woman—sorry, I was dreaming.

★FANNY: I say, Gene——

★GENE: Yes.

★FANNY: I say, Gene——

★GENE: Well?

★FANNY: You're still a fine upstanding young fellow, the best looking of the lot——

★GENE: Well?

★FANNY: Well, I mean to say——

★GENE: Yes?

★FANNY: When you come to think of it—Maggie's always in a tantrum nowadays—of course I wouldn't say a thing against any friend of mine, but between ourselves, I don't envy you. (*Comes close to* Gene.) I say, Gene—what about it? Come along. You can tell Maggie you went to a branch meeting; you can say—oh well, you know what I mean.

★GENE: Do you mean—I'm to stay with you to-night? That what you're driving at? It's so fine and warm to-night. You can't walk a step without falling over a couple of cats. In the park——

★FANNY: It's warm enough to sleep on a bench in the park. I say, Gene—— Fanny *cuddles up to* Gene *and kisses him.* Gene *shakes her off and gives a shout of laughter.*

★FANNY (*furiously*): Do you think I'd run after you?

★GENE: Run after yourself, my dear. Plenty of men running around in the park. Tom cats, she cats, dogs and bitches. It's the heat.

★FANNY (*raging*): Next time you can whistle for me.

*Runs out.*

★GENE (*laughs*): Brokenbrow is dead. Brokenbrow is risen again on the third day and ascended into heaven. There's a naked idol in the market-place. They buzz round him like flies after honey. Walk up, ladies and gentlemen. Sensational revelations! . . . *Me*—a lawful ground for divorce!

*A few moments silence.* Maggie *comes in.*

★MAGGIE: Good evening, Gene.

★GENE (*without looking up*) : And the Lord said to Cain : Where is thy brother Abel? And he answered : Am I my brother's keeper?
★MAGGIE : It's me, Gene.
★GENE : But the Lord said : Thy brother's blood cries to heaven for vengeance.
★MAGGIE : I've brought you some flowers, Gene. It's our wedding anniversary.
★GENE : Some people have the face to laugh at you and come wheedling you in the same breath. Thanks, Maggie. It's kind of you. They're asters, aren't they? Does you good to look at the colours. Our wedding day was lovely, wasn't it—and our wedding night—it *was* lovely.
★MAGGIE : It was peace then.
★GENE : And then came the war. You said: I'm proud of you, proud that you're in the Guards. And when we left for the front, you cried. Were you crying for joy because I was in the Guards?
★MAGGIE : We had so much to look forward to.
★GENE : Yes, the future looked like a bed of roses. But you know, at the front, when a shell dropped on a flower-bed it wiped out the flowers. Plants and animals—animals and people—it's all the same thing. I was a cheery young fellow and didn't think twice about it. You used to be jealous in those days.
★MAGGIE : Yes.
★GENE (*harshly*) : You don't need to be jealous any more now. Now, you can—laugh at me.

Maggie *begins to cry.*

That's right, laugh away! Crying? No play-acting, woman; laugh, laugh! You've learnt how to laugh. You laugh to see a man lay his skinned soul naked in the filth of the street. Stop your crying. Or must I sing to you? (*Sings shrilly the opening of the Merry Widow waltz.*) Why don't you laugh? (*Exhausted.*) I pressed the button, didn't I?
★MAGGIE (*warding him off with outspread palms*) : My God, how you look at me —I'm frightened of you.
★GENE : Frightened? Not you! Frightened of me when I'm not—not even——
★MAGGIE (*quickly—humbly*) : No, I'm not frightened. Indeed I'm not. I love you, how could I be frightened?
★GENE : Tell me the truth, woman.
★MAGGIE : I will.
★GENE : I know all about you.

★MAGGIE: I've been a bad woman, Gene.

★GENE: You're not telling lies, now?

★MAGGIE: I was bad. I'm only a woman, after all. It came over me all of a sudden. I loved you, and at the same time—I didn't love you. It was wicked of me. I don't know if you can ever care for me again?

★GENE: I can't blame you for going with Jock. You had a right to do that, if you loved him.

★MAGGIE (*uncomprehending*): Then you don't love me?

★GENE: Just because I love you.

★MAGGIE (*uncomprehending*): No—no——

★GENE: But you must go away, Maggie. At once. Or, no—I'll go. I'm not making any claims. The furniture is yours. Good-bye.

★MAGGIE: O Gene, O Gene—my dear, my poor, poor dear. I have betrayed you for thirty pieces of silver. I have been a bad woman.

★GENE: Oh! you woman, you! Who taught you to tell lies these last few weeks? Or have I been deaf all along? Not knowing what was going on in my own home? Everything has turned upside down. Butterflies turn into worms—a worm with eyes, a lying worm, wheedling me like a whore that has her living to get. (*Raging.*) Let go my hands. Don't dare to touch me. My crippled body made you sick, but now, now *you* make *me* sick. Your hands—toads, slimy toads. Your breasts, your little round firm breasts—a heap of filth. Your mouth, your sweet red mouth—a stinking cesspool. Your whole body, your strong, healthy, flowering body—I loathe the sight of it—rotting in the midst of health. Nothing but a carcass turning to corruption before my eyes.

★MAGGIE (*on her knees*): Scold me, yes, scold me. Beat me—beat me! I deserve it.

★GENE: Going to the fair and seeing your husband put on show like a wild beast—your husband sucking the blood of wretched little animals—standing there with your lover and laughing—laughing!

★MAGGIE: That's not true. Before God, that's not true.

★GENE: I can't bear to talk to you. You're lying. You're lying—not like a human being but like a devil. Good-bye.

Gene *turns to go.*

★MAGGIE: Say what you like to me, Gene, but stay with me. I take all the blame on myself. Yes, I laughed at the fair—I laughed like this. (*Laughs.*)

*GENE: You deserve to die for that. Not because you had a lover—you had a right to. Not for lying to me—you thought you had a right to. But because you laughed at me—you must die. A mother may strangle her child, and no one have the right to cast a stone at her. But if she laughed while it was choking and mocked its face as it turned black for want of breath—then she should burn in hell to all eternity. I'll let you off lightly, you, woman; I won't leave you to everlasting torment. Why are you kneeling to me? Kneel to *him*. He is your god. Pray to him—pray!

*Drags her to the image of Priapus. His breathing has turned to groaning.*

(*After a moment.*) What—what are you staring at? What's in your eyes? *That's* no lie—I'll take my oath there's no lie in your eyes. I've known your eyes so long now. I saw them first at the works—and then in barracks—and in hospital—and in prison. The same eyes everywhere. The eyes of hunted, beaten, tormented, broken creatures. . . . Maggie, I thought you had everything, and now—you're just as miserable and helpless as I am. . . . Well, if that's the way it is—then I suppose we must be brother and sister to each other. I am you and you are I. . . . And what's to become to us?

*MAGGIE: I will never leave you again.

*GENE: That's not what I mean, Maggie. That's all over and done with. What does it matter to us? What does it matter if you go with some one else, or tell me lies, or laugh at me? It won't help you. Even if you were to go in silks and satins and live in a grand house and never stop laughing—all the same you'd be nothing but a poor unhappy creature just like me. I see that now—I see. . . . Leave me alone, Maggie.

*MAGGIE: Leave you alone, now?

*GENE: There's no help for it. You've got to leave me alone. I've got to leave you alone.

*MAGGIE: What's to become of us?

*GENE: You know, once, about six years ago, when I was in a bad way—I hadn't had enough to eat for weeks—my mouth used to water whenever I saw any one taking a bite of food. In the park I'd see rich people's children eat their morning sandwiches. And to see some kid putting his teeth into a bit of bread and butter—it was frightful the way I felt. I forgot about being hungry. I was wild with

the kid. I couldn't bear to see him. I could have murdered him just to make him stop eating.

*MAGGIE: What do you mean, Gene? I don't see what that has to do with it.

*GENE: It's my own fault that people laugh at me. I ought to have looked out for myself when the big pots and the brass hats started this wickedness that has smashed up the earth. I'm fit to laugh at, yes, and so is everything else in our times—as miserable and ridiculous as I am. The world has lost its soul and I have lost my sex. What's the difference. Let's go our ways. You yours. I mine.

*MAGGIE: What *do* you mean by all this, Gene?

*GENE: Just this: I've seen and understood; but I don't know how long it'll last. A man's nature is stronger than his thoughts. His thoughts are ways of fooling himself.

*MAGGIE: But what's to become of me?

*GENE: You're strong and healthy. There's no place for a cripple in this world where no one's any good that can't make good. Either he's healthy and then his soul is healthy, or he's not right in his mind and ought to be put away. That's what healthy, sensible people say. It's not really true; but it's not really lies either. A cripple is good for nothing—his mainspring's broken, useless, like the wings of those eagles in the Zoo when their tendons are cut. Good-bye, Maggie; I wish you a happy life.

*MAGGIE: Gene, what are you going to do? You won't leave me alone?

*GENE: It's not because of my illness, not because I'm smashed up. . . . But, you see, I walked along the street and there were no people—nothing but grinning faces, rows and rows of horrible grinning faces. And I came home and there were more faces—and then, just wretchedness, senseless, endless wretchedness of blinded creatures. I haven't the strength to go on. I haven't the strength to fight or the strength to believe. A man who has no strength for dreams has lost the strength to live. That bullet was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All that I see, I understand; all that I understand, hurts me. Living is only being hurt and wanting to go on. . . . *I won't go on.*

*MAGGIE: You wouldn't do yourself in? Gene—O Gene, I didn't laugh at you—I swear I didn't laugh. Listen, Gene darling, I'm going to stay with you. For ever and ever. It'll all come right again. You and me. We'll keep each other warm. You and me. Me and you.

★GENE: You didn't laugh—look at me, Maggie—I believe you, Maggie—darling. (*Kisses her tenderly.*) It'll all come right again—you and me. Me and you.

★MAGGIE (*clings to him*): It'll be summer and quiet in the fields. There will be stars and walking hand in hand.

★GENE (*tears himself away*): It'll be autumn and the leaves falling. Cold stars—and hate—and fist against fist.

★MAGGIE (*screams*): Gene!

★GENE (*wearily*): I know too much.

★MAGGIE (*crying helplessly like a child*): Don't leave me alone. I'm lost in the dark. I'll hurt myself. Oh, how it hurts, how it hurts. I'm so frightened to be alone. Think, Gene, think—all alone in the world. And nothing but wild beasts everywhere. No one to be good to you. Every one tearing and biting and scratching. Don't leave me! Don't leave me! Whom God hath joined—I belong to you.

★GENE: What's against nature can't be God's will. Try, Maggie, try to fight your way out. There's nothing wrong with you. Start all over again. Start fighting for a better world—a world that's made for the like of us.

★MAGGIE (*hopelessly shrugging her shoulders*): Even if I wanted to I shouldn't know how. I haven't the fight left in me. I'm all in bits. (*Desperately.*) O God, I'll never find my way. We're caught in a trap, Gene, that's what it is. A spider's got hold of us and won't let go. We're all tied up and tangled and can't move a step. I don't understand what life's about. O dear Lord Jesus, deliver us from evil!

*Goes out heavily.*

★GENE (*alone*): Alpha and Omega, first and last. Who can find any first or last in a spider's web? (*Throws the image of Priapus on to the fire.*) You lying god. You wretched devil, you. (*After a moment.*) If that's the truth, who's got the right to judge his neighbour? We're all condemned to judge ourselves. . . .

Deliver us. Deliver us. In all the streets of all the towns of all the world they cry: Deliver us. The Frenchy that fired off my bullet—or the nigger maybe—he's crying out just the same: Deliver us. I wonder if he's alive and how he likes it? Of all the halt and the maimed and the blind, which is he? He did me in, and another fellow did him in. But who did us all in? All of us: one soul in one body.

To think there's people in the world that don't see that. And people who've forgotten it!

The war came and took them and they hated their chiefs and obeyed orders and killed each other. And it's all forgotten. They'll be taken again and hate their bosses again and obey orders again and—kill each other. Again and again. That's what people are. They might be different if they wanted to. But they don't want to. They mock at life. They scourge and spit upon and crucify life.
Again and again and for ever.
There's no sense in it. Making themselves poor when they might be rich and not need to pray for the kingdom of heaven. The blind and the blinded. Just as if they'd *got* to. Blindman's buff. Round and round—for thousands and thousands of years. As if there was no help for it. As if it had *got* to be. Ships caught in the current, smashing each other to bits.

*Noise of voices outside. The door is thrown open. A crowd of people presses into the room ; led by* Tom Callow.

*TOM : In the yard—in the yard—in the yard—your wife—threw herself down—don't look—don't look at her—don't—it's—terrible.

*The body of* Maggie *wrapped in a sheet is carried in.*

*GENE (*his eyes glazed, moving mechanically*) : Leave me alone. Leave me alone Leave me alone with my wife. . . . (*Beseeching.*) Please.

*They leave the room.*

She was strong and sound. And she broke the net. And here I stand—here I stand—monstrous—ridiculous. In all ages there'll be men like me. But why me? Why should it fall on me? It doesn't pick and choose. It hits this man and that man. And the next and the next go free. What can we know about it? Where from? Where to? Any day the kingdom of heaven may arise, any night the great flood may come and swallow up the earth.

*The stage closes.*

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